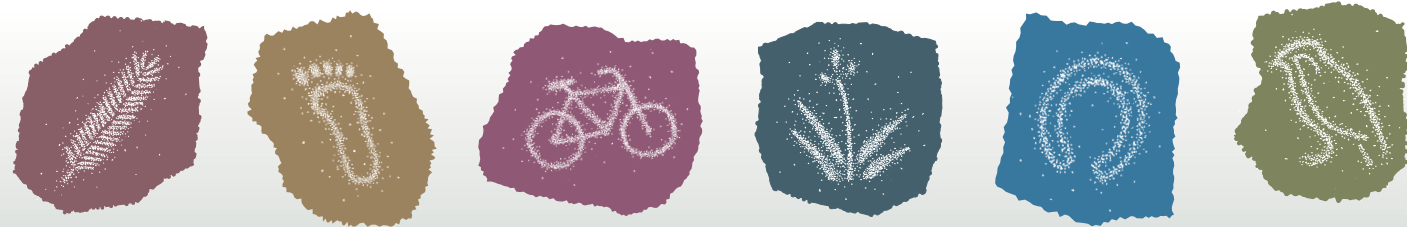
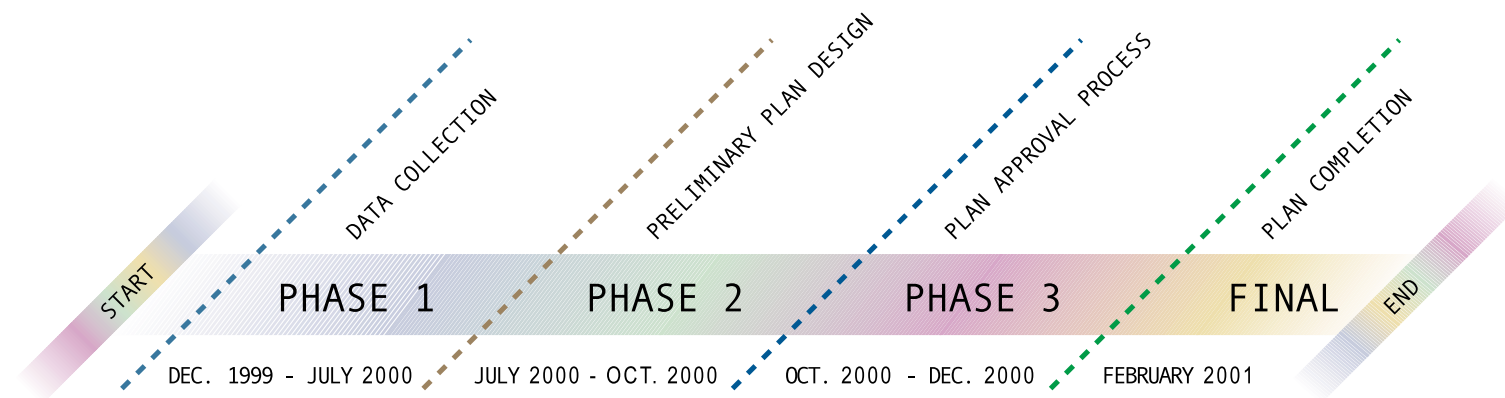


PROJECT TIME LINE



www.mag.maricopa.gov



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WEST VALLEY RIVERS

NEW RIVER & LOWER AGUA FRIA

CONSERVING A RIVER AS A NON-MOTORIZED TRAIL CORRIDOR

Newsletter 1 of 2 • July 2000

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Introduction

The West Valley Rivers Project is actually comprised of two separate ongoing projects. The projects are the *New River & Lower Agua Fria Multi-Modal Corridor Study* and the *Agua Fria Watercourse Master Plan*. This is the first of two newsletters that will provide information specifically about the New River & Lower Agua Fria Multi-Modal Corridor Study (Corridor).

WHAT IS THE NEW RIVER & LOWER AGUA FRIA MULTI-MODAL CORRIDOR STUDY?

The New River & Lower Agua Fria Multi-Modal Corridor Study is a planned 42-mile non-motorized system of urban and rural trails along the New River and Lower Agua Fria River. Designed with the pedestrian, hiker, bicyclist and equestrian in mind, this project offers a unique opportunity to create travel routes to and from homes, businesses, schools and recreation destinations. This study is sponsored by the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) with funding through the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) and the Transportation Equity Act 21st Century (TEA-21) Transportation Enhancement Program.

The Corridor stretches southwest from the community of New River to the convergence of the Lower Agua Fria with the Gila River (see map next page). Several jurisdictions within Maricopa County are connected by the Corridor including Avondale, Glendale, Goodyear, Peoria, Phoenix, and the community of New River.

The design of the trailway emphasizes maintaining the rich diversity of plant and animal habitats, cultural and historic resources, and beautiful vistas found along the river. Protecting these features from the adverse effects of rapid urban development is a main function of the study. Other study objectives include:

- Trail linkages to city bikeways and public transit
- Open space conservation
- Environmental and cultural resource protection and enhancement
- Access to and development of recreation facilities
- Public art opportunities
- Visual quality enhancement



INTRODUCTION CONT.

The public is encouraged to offer ideas and commentary about the study. Open houses and public meetings are planned this fall and winter to provide a venue for an exchange of ideas between the public and the design team.

Information on the public meetings that have already taken place and that are planned for the future is included in this newsletter.

WHAT IS THE AGUA FRIA WATERCOURSE MASTER PLAN?

A second project occurring in the West Valley area is the Agua Fria Watercourse Master Plan, which is examining non-structural flood control issues for the Agua Fria River. Sponsored by the Flood Control District of Maricopa County (FCDMC), this project focuses on protecting the public from the hazards of flooding. The Watercourse Master Plan also provides opportunities to integrate open space and recreation uses with floodplain management. Both the MAG and FCDMC design teams are working together to find opportunities for interlinking trails between the New River and Lower Agua Fria. These two projects combined will provide the West Valley and MAG Region with a signature trail and recreation system that will enhance the quality of life for residents, visitors and future generations.



PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE MEETINGS HELD

Two public meetings were held on March 7th and 9th of this year to provide initial information and gather comments about the MAG and FCDMC projects. Meetings were advertised through a "door hanger" notice and through articles in local newspapers in residential locations along the Corridor. Almost 100 people attended the meetings that were held at Westview High School in Avondale and Peoria High School in Peoria. Participants viewed presentation boards and listened to information from the design team. A question and answer session followed the presentation.

The overall response to the projects was favorable. Suggestions included the development of parks and multi-use trails along the Corridor, and the desire to conserve the natural environment. Concerns were raised regarding the use of motorized vehicles on the trail system, and the increase in development and traffic for the Corridor. All commentary was documented and will be considered by the design team.

HOW IS THIS PROJECT BEING FUNDED?

This project is part of a multiphase undertaking conducted through the efforts of MAG, in cooperation with the FCDMC. Monies for the project are being provided through the ADOT Transportation Enhancement program. The MAG study sets a precedent for an overall plan to be designed involving several communities who will then have the responsibility for building their section of the Plan. This project represents the first time ADOT Transportation Enhancement monies have been used to conduct a planning study. With the completion of this study, each community will be encouraged to continue the process to design and build each segment of the trail as funding becomes available.

OPPORTUNITIES

HOW CAN THE PUBLIC PARTICIPATE?

A one-and-a-half-day **design workshop** is scheduled for Friday, October 6th from 1:30–4:30pm and Saturday, October 7th, from 8:30am–3pm. The workshop will be held at the Glendale Community College, 6000 West Olive Avenue, Glendale. The workshop will be an event where project team members and the public meet to discuss ideas and plans for the design of the project. Following presentations about the character and uses of the Corridor, participants will be divided into groups to "brainstorm" key issues about the trail project. Each group will address issues like neighborhood access, trail alignment, trail user conflict, linkages to parks, trail design themes and other amenities. Afterward, groups will make a general presentation of their ideas.

We encourage anyone who is interested in the New River trail project to become involved and participate in the workshop. If you are interested in participating in the workshop, contact Heather Honsberger, Entranco, 7740 North 16th Street, Suite 200, Phoenix, Arizona 85020, e-mail address: hhonsberger@entranco.com

Two **open house** meetings will be held in early December to present the preliminary plan design. At these informal meetings the public will have the opportunity to ask questions, make comments and offer additional suggestions to the design team.

The public is encouraged to attend both events. Details regarding meeting times and locations will be available through advertisements, newsletters and on the Internet at:

www.mag.maricopa.gov

PROGRESS NOTES

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED SO FAR?

Preliminary data about the New River & Lower Agua Fria Corridor indicates:

DISTINCT CHARACTER TYPES

- The Corridor has three distinct character types that can be divided into a northern, central, and southern section.
- The northern section has an open space, upper Sonoran desert character.
- The central section has an urban character.
- The southern section has an agricultural/residential character.
- The design of each section will address the needs of the community and the individual character type.

LAND USE

- The southern section is actually the Agua Fria River, a wide-open river channel that feeds into the Gila River.
- Archaeological and cultural resource sites are predominant along the northern section of the river.

TRAIL CHARACTER

- A few subdivisions along the Corridor have already begun to include shared-use paths.
- Portions of the Corridor have flood control levees and maintenance roads that can be used to build a shared-use path system.
- The main challenges of the Corridor are the lack of bicycle/pedestrian access to roadway and railroad bridge overpasses, and the lack of safe crossings at busy roadways.
- Several sand and gravel operations exist along the Corridor creating difficulty for building a continuous river trail.

NATURAL FEATURES

- A wide variety of desert animal life is found in the area, including over 150 bird species that depend on the rivers for their habitat.
- Sixteen endangered species are found, which will require habitat identification and avoidance in the development of the Corridor.
- A few emergent wetlands have been identified in the Corridor that will be preserved to maintain critical habitat areas.

PROJECT STEERING COMMITTEE

The Project Steering Committee (PSC) serves as the principal advisory and input source for the study. The PSC consists of representatives from various entities, primarily municipalities and other public agencies with interests along the Corridor, including the cities of Avondale, Glendale, Peoria, Phoenix, the Maricopa County Department of Transportation, and the Flood Control Advisory Board.

PSC meets monthly to discuss the status of both the MAG and FCDMC projects.

For more information about the MAG project contact: Dawn M. Coomer, MAG Transportation Planner, at 602-254-6300. For information on the FCDMC project, call Doug Williams, FCDMC Project Manager, at 602-506-8743.

